

# EASTERN PLAINS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SEPTEMBER 29, 2023 NEWSLETTER 58

## *In This Issue*

Upcoming Grants  
Montana CRDC Annual Meeting  
Reviving History: Baker Bank Building  
Welcome Lacey

## *Upcoming Grant Opportunities*

### **Rural Energy for America Program (REAP)**

**Deadline December 31, 2023**

The program provides guaranteed loan financing and grant funding to agricultural producers and rural small businesses for renewable energy systems or to make energy efficiency improvements. Agricultural producers may also apply for new energy-efficient equipment and new system loans for agricultural production and processing.

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/energy-programs/>

### **MidRivers Education Tech Grants**

**Deadline October 31, 2023**

Mid-Rivers Communications, a telecommunications service provider to 30,000 square miles of Eastern and Central Montana, is proud to announce the availability of up to \$80,000 in grants! Education Tech Grants are offered by Mid-Rivers! Eligible Applicants are accredited educational facilities (including public, private, and home schools) located within the Mid-Rivers service area and non-profit entities with an educational mission serving the Mid-Rivers service area.

<https://mid-rivers.submittable.com/submit/a5fodd11-2312-47ef-819d-f3be32187e44/2023-education-tech-grant>

### **Growth Through Ag Grant (GTA)**

The Department of Ag has opened the GTA grant to rural food and ag producers. Investing in processing infrastructure to add value to Montana crops and commodities. This is for businesses focused on vertical integration. Please reach out to our FADC specialist, Lacey at [FADC@EPEDC.com](mailto:FADC@EPEDC.com) for help with questions about this grant opportunity.

<https://agr.mt.gov/News/GTA-Grant-and-Loan-Program-RFP-Sept-2023>

## Montana CRDC Meeting

Eastern Plains Economic Development is a Certified Regional Development Corporation. In such a capacity we strive to organize and encourage regional economic development meetings and projects. We can apply for and facilitate state and federal grants and loans. Recently, our executive director, Terra, attended a CRDC network meeting in Ronan, MT. The meeting was a great opportunity to meet with other CRDC's Executive Directors from around the state. This meeting facilitated conversations about childcare, housing, and workforce issues plaguing our communities. These conversations lead to finding new opportunities in tackling these issues but also give us insight into how similar our issues are across the state. The group spoke about doing a better job of making the public aware of how CRDCs help within our communities. Terra also had the opportunity to tour the Mission West Community Development Center in Ronan. Jan and her team were able to give us a look into their food co-op operation and all of their amazing capabilities. Please feel free to reach out to EPEDC if you have any questions about CRDCs.

# Reviving History: The Transformation of the Baker Bank Building

In the heart of Baker's downtown, history has come alive through the remarkable journey of the Baker State Bank Building. This iconic structure, which later became known as the home of Junction 39, has witnessed over a century of history, and it is through the tireless efforts of SMART (Southeastern Montana Advancement and Resource Team) and with Technical Assistance from EPEDC that this historical gem has been revitalized. Built-in 1910, the Baker State Bank Building had seen better days, fallen into disrepair, and stood vacant for years. However, in April 2020, SMART stepped in and purchased both the original building and an adjacent vacant lot. This marked the beginning of a transformational journey. The road to restoration was not without its challenges. The building needed extensive asbestos and lead paint abatement, a task undertaken in collaboration with Eastern Plains Economic Development Corporation, and the Eastern Montana Brownfields Coalition in July 2021. SMART's commitment to restoring this historical landmark led to a series of grants that facilitated the building's resurrection. EPEDC helped with technical assistance for the Façade improvement grants from the Foundation for Montana History and the Eastern Montana Economic Development Authority enabling the replacement of all front windows and doors on the West side of the building. SMART invested \$94,000 into interior renovations, transforming the first floor into a bustling business incubator, where the local gem Junction 39, a vintage and resale shop, opened its doors in October 2022. With a Montana Main Street grant in hand, SMART developed a comprehensive phasing plan to complete the building remodel. In late 2022 and early 2023, SMART received a Montana Tourism Grant to convert the east addition into Fallon County's very first Visitor Center. A second Tourism Grant with the help of Beth Epley from EPEDC supported the Visitor Center's construction, while a Main Street Grant aimed to transform the adjacent vacant lot into what Beth Epley coined "The World's Best Pocket Park." To preserve the building's historical integrity, a Montana State Historical Preservation Grant will repair/replace the roofs of both the Baker State Bank Building and the adjacent east addition (the Visitor Center). The Community Investment Program Grant from Grid United and the Montana Community Foundation will aid in finishing the interior remodel of the Visitor Center. Moreover, an EMEDA Façade Improvement Grant will help SMART add a Visitor Center sign and ensure ADA accessibility. In just three years, from July 2021 onwards, SMART with the help of EPEDC secured a remarkable total of 11 different grants, amounting to nearly half a million dollars (\$466,000). This financial support has allowed them to transform a once-vacant, 113-year-old building into a vibrant retail space, a hub for tourism, and a welcoming green space in the heart of Baker's downtown. The revitalization of the Baker State Bank Building is a testament to what can be achieved through dedication, vision, and collaboration. We invite you all to be a part of this incredible journey and witness the ongoing transformation of this historic gem.

*\*\*Thank you to Vaughn Zinko of SMART for helping gather the information for this article!\*\**

## Welcome Lacey

EPEDC welcomes Lacey Newton as our new Food and Ag Development Specialist. In this role, Lacey will provide support to producers looking to grow and expand their businesses. She will be a resource for communities and organizations focusing on the food and ag industry.

Lacey has resided in Dawson County since 2021 when she and her family moved here from the Flathead Valley. She is a mom of two boys and a hobby gardener. Lacey is working towards a bachelor's degree in sustainable food and farming and is excited to utilize her education as an FADC Specialist. To learn more about how the FADC can help you, please reach out to Lacey at [FADC@EPEDC.com](mailto:FADC@EPEDC.com) or visit [EPEDC.com](http://EPEDC.com) and go to services for food and ag development center.

**Next Board Meeting**  
January 17  
Glendive, Montana

## Contact Information

Terra Burman  
EPEDC Executive Director  
[tburman@epedc.com](mailto:tburman@epedc.com)  
(408) 772 - 1152

Lacey Newton  
Food & Ag Development Specialist  
[FADC@epedc.com](mailto:FADC@epedc.com)  
(406) 249-1946

Visit [epedc.com](http://epedc.com) for more information

The EPEDC serves the following counties and municipalities: Carter County, Dawson County, Fallon County, Prairie County and Wibaux County, as well as the Town of Ekalaka, the City of Baker, the City of Glendive, the Town of Plevna, the Town of Richey, the Town of Terry and the Town of Wibaux.